

Washington, DC – During an immigration subcommittee hearing today, Rep. Linda Sánchez highlighted two important issues that are often wrongly united – high unemployment and undocumented people in the workforce – by asking TV Host Stephen Colbert how much he would have to get paid to work in the farms as a career.

“After his experience working the fields, I asked Mr. Colbert hypothetically how much employers would have to pay him to be a farm worker as a career, ” said Rep. Linda Sánchez. **“** His response showed that the reluctance of Americans to engage in seasonal migrant work is based on more than the wage offered. I think Mr. Colbert’s appearance today highlights the importance of this topic and I hope it brings about some better informed individuals.**”**

Watch the video here: <http://www.youtube.com/lindatsanchez>

The Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law held a hearing entitled “Protecting America’s Harvest” to examine the American agricultural sector’s reliance on foreign workers to pick fruit and vegetables across America’s farms.

“Not all agricultural workers in this country are covered by labor protections like workers compensation, minimum wage, overtime, or the right to organize, ” continued Sánchez. **“If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle really want labor wages to go up, they should be true advocates for labor reform to change this. Instead, they vote no on any legislation that tries to raise wages or protect workers.****”**

Due to a diminishing supply of U.S. workers willing to perform manual migrant agricultural labor, agricultural employers have increasingly come to depend on foreign workers to meet their labor demands. Without these foreign workers, many American farms would likely go out of business, potentially causing a crippling ripple effect on our economy. This would lead directly to a larger reliance on imported food, thereby increasing our trade deficit and making us increasingly dependent on foreign countries for the health and safety of our national food supply. The hearing today explored labor needs in the agricultural sector, attempts to recruit U.S. workers for agricultural labor, the lack of reliable and efficient avenues to legally hire foreign workers, and potential solutions.